Toward Graduation for All Students

Coordinating School, Family, and Community Activities for Student Success

Monograph Series No. 4

The Office of Public Instruction

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Dear Educators, Administrators, Parents and Community Friends of Education,

This monograph is one in a series of papers that focus on contemporary issues in Montana schools. It is our hope that the research and resources contained here will build awareness and identify skills that will be helpful to you in addressing some of the most pressing and relevant topics confronting our students and staff today.

The information is designed to clarify key problems, identify strategies to affirm students, and provide school personnel with knowledge and information to make good decisions. Many of these contemporary issues involve difficult barriers (both subtle and overt) to educational equity guaranteed by the Montana Constitution.

This series is designed to present in a brief and concise format the newest research, ideas, and successful practices of educators across the nation. We are sensitive to your need for current information as you are faced with critical decisions involving curriculum, educational equity, and the demands and concerns of your community members. Resources, research and technical assistance on successful practices will be included in each monograph.

One of my priorities is to assist educators, administrators and community members in solving contemporary problems in education so that our students receive the best preparation we can give them for full and productive lives. I sincerely hope these monograph issues will be a strong contribution to our joint efforts to put Montana's children and youth first. Your reactions and responses to this monograph series are welcomed.

Sincerely,

Nancy Keenan

Students At Risk Clock

Every 55 seconds a baby is born
to a mother who is not a high school
graduate.

Every 21 seconds a 15-19
year old woman becomes
sexually active for the
first time.

Every 14 hours a child
younger than 5 is murdered.

Every 2 seconds of
the school day a public
school student is suspended.

Every 5 hours a 15-19
year old is murdered.

Every 10 seconds of the school
day a student drops out of school.

Foreword

Amy, a high school junior, recently had a baby. Since she's not married, she's living at home with her mother. She left school a couple of weeks prior to the baby's birth and is now ready to return. Her main concern is how to take care of the baby and still go to school. Her mother works days, is unable to help, and thinks it would be better for Amy to quit school and find a job. Amy stops by the school, finds out she could come back but has a lot of make-up work to do and even missed some things she can't make up, and two teachers think she should repeat the semester. After visiting the school, Amy's mind is made up . . . "I'm looking for a job."

Pete, a sophomore, lives at home with his mother and father, two brothers and a sister. Pete lives in the city where there are numerous entry-level, minimum-wage jobs in fast food restaurants, as janitors and as sales clerks. He knows that he could get a job if he tried. Pete has never been held back in school but has never done very well. He always just managed enough to get by. It seems like he has always disliked school, never cared for any of his teachers, and it seemed like just about all his friends felt the same way. His daily routine at school was always about the same; he would arrive on time, sit in the back of the class, not interact, go to the next class, not interact . . . until the end of the school day when he could be with his friends. It was as if he had an understanding with his teachers: "I won't bother you, if you don't bother me." One day Pete just decided it wasn't worth going back.

Are Amy and Pete isolated situations? Was dropping out of school their fault? Their parents' fault? The school's fault? Nobody's fault? Should it raise concerns for educators? For the community? For parents? Are there things we could and maybe should be doing? The National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience Youth Cohort estimates the number of school dropouts annually at 1.5 million. The majority of these students give school and family-related concerns as their two major reasons for dropping out. And although many students "drop" out of school and then "drop" back in only to finish high school at some later time, many who drop out will not set foot in school again.

In looking at the problem of school dropouts, it is important for us to consider not only the personal loss to the individual, but also the economic and social cost to the community, recent demographic changes, and the future.

Between 1980 and 1990, the population of the United States increased by 22.1 million persons to a total of 248.7 million. Various ethnic and racial groups increased at different rates as shown on Table 1.

Some changes also took place within the family between 1980 and 1990: 82 percent of all children had working mothers in 1990, and single-women parents were raising 13.7 million children with a median family income of $10,982 (as of 1989).

Table 1. Percent Change in U.S. Population by Race and Ethnicity 1980-1990	
	1980-1990 Increase
Total, U.S.	9.8%
White, non-Hispanic	6.0%
Black	13.2%
Native American, Eskimo, Aleut	37.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	107.8%
Hispanic (of any race)	53.0%
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.	

According to Harold Hodgkinson of the Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc./Center for Demographic Policy who writes in **A Demographic Look at Tomorrow**,

> In 1990, 13 percent of all children were regularly hungry, 25 percent were born to unmarried parents, over 20 percent of all children under age 18 were poor, about 350,000 children were born to drug-addicted mothers, 19 percent had no health insurance, and 166 juveniles of every 100,000 were behind bars.

Also, according to Hodgkinson, the number one risk factor or predictor for going to prison (1,115,111 U.S. prisoners in 1990) is being a high school dropout. He says: "Eighty-two percent of America's prisoners are high school dropouts. The best way to reduce crime rates is not to build more jails but to reduce the high school dropout rate, giving youth a 'straight' alternative." This would seem to make good sense when you consider that the taxpayer doles out between $20,000-$30,000 per year per prisoner and that 73 percent of all prisoners released end up back in jail within three years! In comparison, the average annual cost for a public school student is about $5,000.

Educators should also consider the workforce and some of the things that will change in where and how people will be working. In 1950 there were 18 people in the workforce supporting each retiree; in 2035 there will be only two per retiree if current trends continue. That means a huge (maybe impossible) strain on the Social Security system. By the year 2010, the employment situation will be even more two-tiered than it is now with 30-40 percent of the jobs requiring college education and 30+ percent being minimum salary jobs.

So, what are the prospects for Amy and Pete? They could drop out of school, look forward to a minimum salary job with little opportunity for advancement or a life on social benefits, and little opportunity for a chance to live the "American dream," or a system could be put in place which dovetails the efforts of the family, school and community designed to assist Amy and Pete to complete high school and encourage them to continue their education.

According to Dale Mann in **School Dropouts; Patterns and Policies**:

> Ten percent of those that quit also drop back in ("stopouts") and that of those returnees, 90 percent go on to postsecondary education.

The changes that have taken place into the 1990s and the prospects for the future make it imperative that we wait no longer in dealing with the multitude of problems our youth now face. Harold Hodgkinson sums it up in **A Demographic Look at Tomorrow** when he says:

By about 2010, most Americans should come to see that as the number of children continue to decline as a percent of the U.S. population, we cannot afford to throw any child away. The neglect of one-third of youth, common throughout the 1980s, will be seen as being contrary to the nation's interest, particularly the local community.

In Montana, it is hard to give exact figures concerning the number of students who drop out of school between kindergarten and high school graduation. In Montana, we estimate a "90 percent" high school completion rate, but determining the rate is complicated because of a variety of methods for calculating dropouts, a lack of many schools' ability to track students who have discontinued attendance, and a general reluctance on the part of many schools to keep accurate track of students. It should also be mentioned that many students "drop" out of school only to "drop" back in. This can happen several times, or a student may drop out in one state and back in in another.

Whatever the number of Montana dropouts, any amount is significant. Surveys such as the **Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey** show that other problems associated with dropping out of school are exhibited by Montana youth in a similar proportion to the rest of the country: delinquency, alcohol and drug use, and teen pregnancy, which will be discussed later.
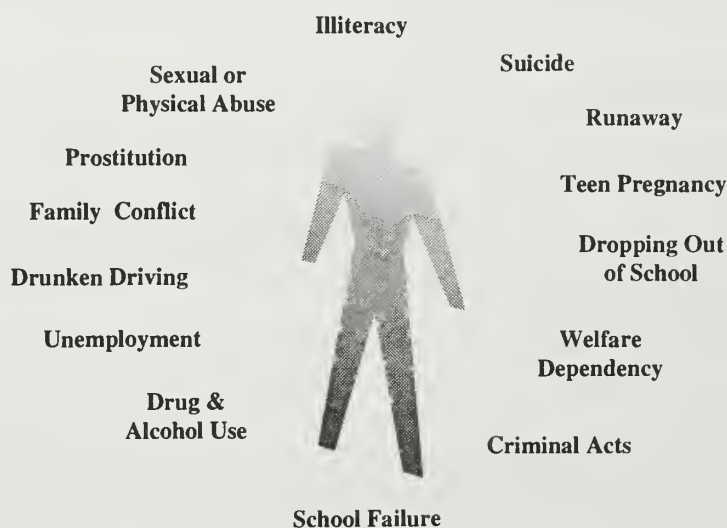
The simple conclusion is: **Montana cannot afford to have students drop out of school!** The student cannot afford to limit his or her future by dropping out and society cannot afford the social and economic costs. Together the family, school and community can look at solutions, plans and programs which will encourage students to stay in school. This monograph is designed to look at the risk factors associated with becoming a school dropout and also the actions that the family, school, and community can take to assist students to remain in school. It is the intent of this monograph that school personnel will read this document, look at the interaction of youth risk behaviors, and look at ways in which schools can reach out to students who may need a little extra help.

Who Will be a Dropout?

PREDICTING A DROPOUT

It is appropriate to consider dropping out of school as a process rather than an isolated event. Whether or not students drop out of school or remain in school is a process that starts within the family even before the child is enrolled in school and is facilitated one way or another by the community and school. Whatever they are called: "antecedents," "predictors," or "risk factors," the events that ultimately lead to dropping out of school are well documented. Many of the antecedents leading to school dropout are predictors of other health or social problems such as alcohol and drug use, tobacco use, teen pregnancy and delinquency. In fact, these problems are so intertwined that one is also a predictor of the others as described on Illustration 1.

Illustration 1. A Web of Related Behavioral Problems

Illiteracy

Sexual or
Physical Abuse

Suicide

Runaway

Prostitution

Teen Pregnancy

Family Conflict

Dropping Out
of School

Drunken Driving

Unemployment

Welfare
Dependency

Drug &
Alcohol Use

Criminal Acts

School Failure

Another way of stating this has to do with probability. Examining specific antecedents of behavior may indicate that this student or that student has a higher probability of dropping out of school, using drugs, smoking, etc., than a student who does not exhibit those antecedents. Also, a young person exhibiting one risk behavior is more likely to be involved in a series of other risk behaviors. This allows identification of those children and students who are at higher risk, and development of programs to meet their specific needs.

A look at the antecedents shows most of them falling into four broad categories: the school, the community, the family and peers. Some of the antecedents are the same for all four groups as shown by the following category lists. Illustration 2 shows the social systems' impact on behavioral problems.

Illustration 2. Social Systems that Influence Behavioral Problems

PEERS

FAMILY

SCHOOL

COMMUNITY
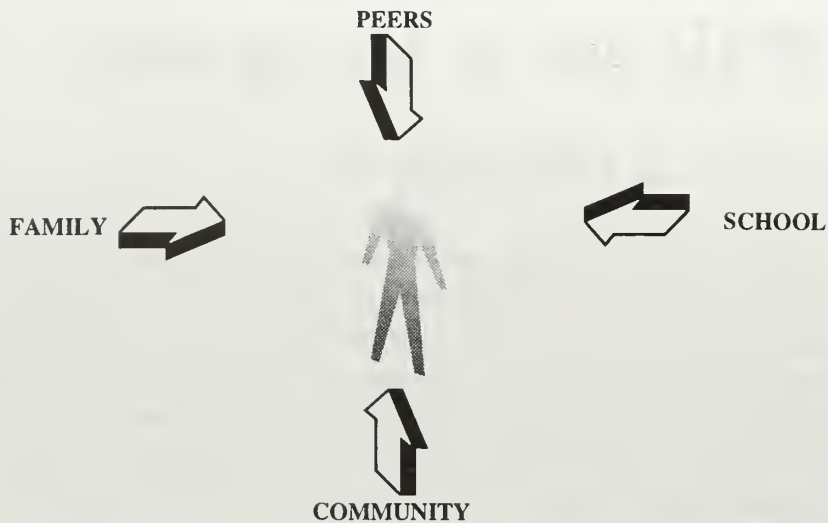
ANTECEDENTS ASSOCIATED WITH DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL

SCHOOL AND STUDENT

The school exhibits:
- a lack of clear policies designed for student assistance
- presence of policies that are merely punitive in nature
- low expectations for students
- high grade retention rates
- major school transitions
- a lack of caring

The student exhibits:
- a lack of involvement, low participation, low interest
- little commitment to school
- academic failure, low grades
- dislike toward school, bored
- antisocial behavior, alienation, nonconformity
- truancy, suspension, expulsion
- alternative or vocational school student

COMMUNITY

The community exhibits:
- economic and social deprivation
- high-density urban area or a rural area
- low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization

- community norms favorable to dropping out and other health and social risk behaviors
- area of higher rates of employment (students are enticed by the easy availability of jobs)
- lack of caring

FAMILY

The family exhibits:
- lack of monitoring, lack of clear expectations for behavior, family management problems
- lack of caring
- low expectations
- family in poverty
- low levels of family education
- family on welfare
- family frequently moves
- inconsistent discipline, severe or too permissive
- few study aids in the home
- not living with both natural parents

PEERS

Peers exhibit:
- friends who have low expectations for school
- friends who are involved in other risk behaviors: smoking, drinking, taking drugs, delinquency, sexual activity, etc.
- friends who drop out of school
- early initiation of problem behavior

In addition to the antecedents already mentioned, there are additional risk factors associated with dropping out of school: being older than other students in the grade, being an American Indian, Hispanic or Black, not speaking English as a native language, and being a male (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of eighth graders with various risk factors, by selected background characteristics: 1988

Background characteristics	Parent is single	Parents have no H.S. diploma[1]	Limited English proficiency	Family income less than $15,000	Has a sibling who dropped out	Home alone more than 3 hours[2]
Total	22.3	10.5	2.3	21.3	10.0	13.6
Sex						
Male	22.0	10.1	2.4	20.0	10.3	14.3
Female	22.5	11.0	2.2	22.2	9.8	13.0
Race/ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander	14.2	8.8	7.1	17.8	6.1	15.9
Hispanic	23.4	33.4	8.8	37.5	16.0	16.3
Black	46.5	15.8	1.6	47.0	13.0	19.5
White	17.7	6.2	0.8	14.1	8.8	12.0
American Indian and Native Alaskan	31.1	13.4	8.6	40.1	15.1	18.6

[1]Neither of student's parents has high school diploma.
[2]Time spent after school each day at home with no adult present.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988—A Profile of the American Eighth Grader: NELS:88 Student Descriptive Summary,* June 1990.

Background characteristics	No risk factors	Only one risk factor	Two or more risk factors
Total	53.3	26.3	20.4
Sex			
Male	53.2	27.0	19.7
Female	53.4	25.5	21.1
Race/ethnicity			
Asian/Pacific Islander	57.5	27.3	15.2
Hispanic	32.0	31.5	36.6
Black	28.4	30.7	40.9
White	61.5	24.5	14.0
American Indian and Native Alaskan	35.3	33.2	31.5

Percentage of eighth graders with various risk factors[1], by selected background characteristics

[1]Risk factors include single-parent family, parents dropped out, limited English proficiency, low family income, sibling dropout, and home alone more than three hours after school.

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988—A Profile of the American Eighth Grader: NELS:88 Student Descriptive Summary,* March 1990.

# RISK BEHAVIOR OF MONTANA STUDENTS

As mentioned earlier, many of the antecedents for dropping out of school are the same as for other risk behaviors. But Montanans are lucky....lucky in that we are insulated from the problems of large cities, the crises of inner city schools, and the issues faced by high percentages of ethnically diverse populations....or are we? What is it that we do know about the risk behavior of Montana kids? Statewide surveys conducted by the Office of Public Instruction, other state agencies and organizations in 1989, 1991, and 1993, have shown that Montana adolescents are often not in better shape than adolescents in other states....and, in many instances, are even worse!

Some surprising health-related statistics about Montana adolescents are: the suicide rate for Montana adolescents is the 5th **highest** in the nation; Montana adolescents rank as the 9th **highest** in death from motor vehicle crashes; 7th **highest** in death from other accidents; and 26th **highest** in adolescent homicide! In addition, Montana students rank higher than the national average for alcohol use and about even with the national average for drug use, sexual activity, and eating disorders. And, although Montana youth smoke less than the national average, their use of chewing tobacco by both sexes is higher than the national average. All of this data makes one point crystal clear: **Montana youth are not insulated from problem risk behaviors, including dropping out of school and, in fact, exhibit risk behaviors consistent with or worse than youth of other states.** Our "ruralness" may not be the safeguard many people assume it to be but rather a risk factor in itself! (See Graph 1.)

Leading Causes of Death - 1991

Montana Adolescents Aged 15 - 24
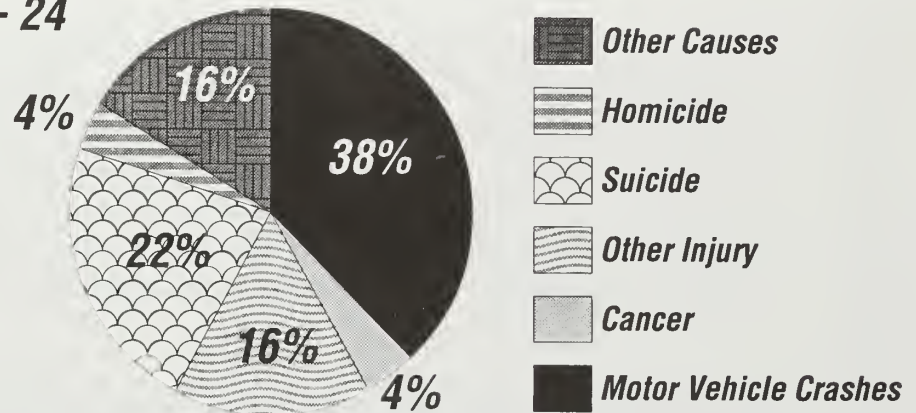
Source : DHES 1991 Montana Vital Statistics

Although some antecedents such as poverty, community norms, population density, and employment rates may be outside the realm of the school to deal with, others are a direct or indirect responsibility of the school. This is the point at which the community, **parents, teachers** and **school decision makers** (administrators and board members) must address the question "what is the responsibility of the school?" This is the question that has become more difficult in recent years. Picture the behavior of a student as like being on a trampoline....with the spotters being the school on one side, the community on another, parents on a third and peers on a fourth. What happens when one side doesn't do its job? Either the student falls off into risk behavior or someone must stretch their resources to try to cover two sides.

Two arguments can be made. One argument: "The responsibility of the school is to teach the basics as described by the *Montana School Accreditation Standards* and required by the local board of trustees. If students want the education, they'll come to school. If not, they'll drop out." Another position: "Our responsibility is to meet the needs of kids....if they come to school hungry, they won't learn, so we'll feed them; if they come to school needing glasses, they won't learn until we get them glasses; and if it's something else they need for school success and nobody else is there to do it, then we'll do that, too!" It's something like asking if schools are there to meet the needs of kids or kids are there to meet the needs of schools. The information presented in this monograph assumes that sometimes schools have to function in roles that have not been traditional. Sometimes schools must do things in lieu of parents or it just won't get done.

Working to Keep Kids in School Rather Than Pushing Them Out

Remember that for many students, antecedents for dropping out of school will already be in place before they ever enroll in school. Consequently, to not take an active roll in preventing dropping out of school is to already start the process of school-assisted pushing out. How does "pushing out" manifest itself? There are many ways, some active and some passive. An active way might be: "You've hit the 15 day absence limit, so you fail this semester." A passive way might be as simple as having low expectations of a student or not including that student in classroom activities. Students soon get the message, "I don't count. I can't do this work. Nobody cares, so I might just as well leave." The variety of paths a student might take are shown in Illustration 3.

Rather than dwell on the negative aspects of how schools assist in the pushing-out process, this monograph will deal with how schools can assist with helping students stay in school and, as a result, protect them from other risk behaviors. It must also be mentioned that although parents, school, community and peers are all involved, so is the student. And, although the school can develop policies and programs which will assist in keeping students in school, students should also be assisted to develop their own strengths. These programs, activities or characteristics are known as "protective factors" or, in the case of students, "resiliency" attributes.

Since the process of becoming a school dropout starts early in life, even before starting school, the need is evident for intervention programs that develop skills at an early age. These types of programs could include early education opportunities such as Head Start or parenting classes for adults which many schools are already conducting.

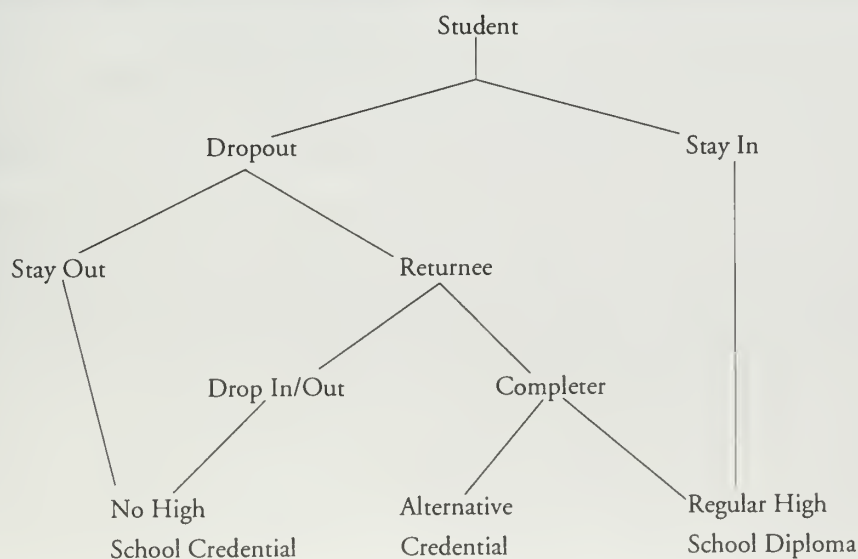## Illustration 3—Paths to Graduation or Dropping Out

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Table 3 below shows the antecedents associated with dropping out of school (which relate to the school itself) matched to the concepts of prevention programming interventions. Although these antecedents are related to teachers, they are primarily aimed at school decision makers. Teachers will be discussed later.

Table 3: Framework of Strategies for Prevention of High-Risk Behavior

School-Related Antecedents	Interventions
• lack of policies designed for student assistance	review all school policies (such as "15 days of absence rule") to ensure that they meet the needs of all students and are designed to keep students in school rather than push them out
• low expectations for students	school reorganization —school-based planning —individual tutoring —team teaching —cooperative learning —experiential education including community service and part-time job placement —intensive individual attention —student advisors
• student academic failure/low grades	—well-designed remediation —clear academic expectations —course work related to interests and talent
• students with antisocial behavior	—clear rules/policy —consistent application —individual attention —social skills development —opportunities to participate in student activities —meaningful involvement

While school boards and administrators establish the infrastructure necessary to keep students in school, ultimately the individual teacher implements activities which will foster resiliency in kids. Much of the research on the development of protective factors in the school, community and family has been synthesized by Bonnie Benard in her publication <u>Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community</u>, published by the Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities and republished, with permission, by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. According to Benard, teachers (and schools) can provide assistance in three areas which will help students develop a protective shield against risk behavior: **caring and support, high expectations, and meaningful involvement.** Interestingly enough, these are also the three things identified by research as protective factors provided by the family and community.

CARING AND SUPPORT

Benard states:
> Obviously, resilient youth are those youth who have and take the opportunity to fulfill the basic human need for social support, caring, and love. If this is unavailable to them in their immediate family environments, it is imperative that the school provide the opportunities to develop caring relationships with both adults and other youth.

While teachers at the elementary level who have the same classroom of students all day can observe student needs more readily than upper-level teachers who teach a different class each hour, all teachers need to be aware of the importance of personal concern.

Benard's citations include:
> At a time when the traditional structures of caring have deteriorated, schools must become places where teachers and students live together, talk with each other, take delight in each other's company. My guess is that when schools focus on what really matters in life, cognitive ends we now pursue so painfully and artificially will be achieved somewhat more naturally. It is obvious that children will work harder and do things— even odd things like adding fractions—for people they love and trust.(Nel Noddings, 1988)

> Based on his research into effective schools, James Coleman similarly speculates that if we were to "reinstitute the school as an agent of families," with the primary emphasis on caring for the child—on providing the "attention, personal interest, and intensity of involvement, some persistence and continuity over time, and a certain degree of intimacy—children would develop the necessary "attitudes, effort, and conception of self that they need to succeed in school and as adults." (1987)

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The research has been in place now for many years concerning the dangers that surround the "self-fulfilling prophecy" of assuming students "cannot" do something. The problem with this, however, is that it extends far beyond mere academic success. Providing an atmosphere of high expectations can assist in retaining students in school, improving graduation rates, increasing the number of students continuing education beyond high school, and reducing the potential for developing other problem behaviors such as delinquency, drug use and early sexual activity. High expectations for students can relate to both academic and social arenas.

Benard continues...
> The successful schools seemed to share certain characteristics: an academic emphasis, teachers' clear expectations and regulations, high level of student participation, and many, varied alternative resources—library facilities, vocational work opportunities, art, music, and extracurricular activities. A major critical finding was that the relationships between a school's characteristics and student behavior increased over time; that is, the number of problem behaviors experienced by a youth decreased over time in the successful schools and increased in the unsuccessful schools. Rutter concluded that

"schools that foster high self-esteem and that promote social and scholastic success reduce the likelihood of emotional behavioral disturbance." (1979)

During the last several years, research on successful programs for youth at risk of academic failure has clearly demonstrated that a school-wide climate of high expectations is a critical factor in reducing academic failure and increasing the number of college-bound youth.

. . . have clearly demonstrated that engaging students at risk for school failure in a challenging, speeded-up as opposed to a slowed-down curriculum has positive academic and social outcomes. These findings are in direct contrast to the dismal outcomes of children who are labeled as slow learners and tracked into low-ability classes.

To the extent that it makes services available for those who are currently in distress, labeling can be a beneficial process. However,...the benefits of labeling are lost when those who are identified suffer negative consequences as a result of the labeling process.

MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT

Related to high expectations is meaningful involvement. Again, through a self-fulfilling prophecy, teachers tend to assist some students toward success and others toward failure. **All** students need meaningful involvement in class activities, functions and discussions, or the message is clear: "I don't think you'll make it." Students need to be actively engaged with their teachers and with their curricula. A lack of involvement tends to "snowball" as students get older, fall behind further, and become more disinterested. Remember, becoming a school dropout is a process, not a single event.

According to Benard:
> The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to social institutions like the family, the school, and the community, a process that has been consistently identified in study after study as a major risk factor for involvement in alcohol and other drugs, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and depression and suicide. The challenge clearly for these social institutions—and especially for the schools—is to engage youth by providing them opportunities to participate in meaningful, valued activities and roles—those involving problem-solving, decision-making, planning, goal-setting, helping others.

All of the protective factors provided for by the school, community, family, and peers combine to give students a strength in resisting negative health behaviors. This strength is called "resiliency." Again, research has determined the characteristics of the "resilient" child. These attributes are developed and reinforced over time...the earlier the initiation, and greater the reinforcement...the more likely it is for the student to graduate from high school, not be involved with alcohol and drugs, not be involved with premature sexual activity, and not become a delinquent. The list below indicates the social competencies of the resilient child:

• Effectiveness in work, play and relationship:
  —establishes healthy friendships
  —is goal-oriented

- Healthy expectancies and a positive outlook:
  —believes that effort and initiative will pay off
  —is oriented to success rather than failure

- Self-esteem and internal locus of control:
  —feels competent, has a sense of personal power, and believes that one can control events in one's environment rather than being a passive victim

- Self-discipline:
  —has the ability to delay gratification and control impulse drives, maintains a future orientation

- Problem-solving and critical-thinking skills:
  —has the ability to think abstractly, reflectively and flexibly
  —is able to define alternative solutions to problems

- Humor:
  —has the ability to generate comic relief and alternative amusing ways of looking at things
  —can laugh at self and situations

SCHOOL PLANNING TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DROPOUTS

Starting an initiative to look at how to deal with the problem of school dropouts can be as simple as an individual teacher assessing her or his own teaching style and classroom rapport...or as complex as a communitywide task force looking at ways the entire community can encourage students to stay in school. A practical approach, however, might be to clearly identify the problem at the school building or district level. Information should be gathered that will identify reasons for development of intervention strategies. Statistics on dropouts, expulsions, suspensions, school infractions, suicides, arrest rates, or academic failure may highlight the problems that need to be addressed. Data on dropouts might be gathered using information in Appendix E which addresses the gathering of dropout data using a consistent methodology. Unless baseline data is gathered, awareness may be difficult to arouse and evaluation of program impact will be almost impossible. The information can then be presented to a committee made up of school administrators and teachers, parents, students, and community members. The initial discussion might center on the role of the school in not only the academic, but also the social development of the child. From there, it might focus on the antecedents of becoming a school dropout and how the school currently either prevents or facilitates student dropouts. The vision of this process might be to:

- reduce specific antecedents leading to dropping out,

- strengthen a set of protective factors and develop resiliency in youth, and

- reduce specific identified local problems or behaviors.

The following list includes components which may assist schools in the development of a planned program to reduce dropout rates and other problem behaviors. (Planners may wish to utilize information from Appendixes A and B.)

1. Planning process
   - includes school, parents, students, and community
   - shows administrative commitment
   - assesses local issues and resources
   - plans an effective program
   - examines local dropout data
   - looks at school organization and infrastructure
   - determines method of assessing impact of the program

2. School policy
   - includes a review of existing policy
   - develops clear and appropriate policy for student assistance
   - ensures that administration, board members, teachers, parents, and student know and understand the policies
   - develops school aftercare programs for students returning to school after drug treatment, depression/suicide treatment, eating disorder treatment, etc.
   - includes a policy for pregnant youth and young mothers to assist their remaining in school
   - considerations for class size

3. Staff
   - understand and appreciate the significance of the problem
   - are provided awareness training and specific training on effective classroom management
   - work together to determine innovative approaches
   - work one-on-one with students

4. Parent involvement
   - provides parenting workshops on health and social development
   - encourages parental involvement in the school (PSTAs, etc.)
   - provides discussion groups to focus on parent involvement
   - encourages teacher outreach to parents

5. Curriculum development
   - anticipates needs of students when selecting/developing curriculum
   - assesses a variety of teaching strategies designed to meet the needs of different learning styles
   - discusses teaching options (e.g., team teaching) and their appropriateness
   - provides social competence skills training

6. Early initiation of programs
   - assess the feasibility of preschool education
   - realize the importance of starting early and providing positive reinforcement
   - understand the relationship of other programs in the "network" such as guidance, Drug-Free Schools and Communities and other prevention programs
   - develop programs which utilize peers in positive ways such as peer tutoring, peer counseling, etc.
   - establish peer group programs; support groups for students at increased risk

7. Community involvement
    *   identifies community resources and programs
    *   develops a child protection team with representatives from other local agencies including law enforcement and justice to share information and referral assistance
    *   includes the church and its resources
    *   keeps the community informed of activities and progress

8. Positive alternatives
    *   provide interscholastic and intramural activities
    *   offer volunteer job service opportunities at school and in the community
    *   provide a variety of school activities with active planning and organization from students

9. Evaluation
    *   Assesses changes in school organization and infrastructure
    *   Evaluates impact of the program by changes seen when:
        —surveying risk behaviors
        —examining dropout rate
        —assessing numbers in activities
        —looking at infraction rate
        —assessing retentions/failures

Joy G. Dryfoos, noted author on adolescent health risk behavior, lecturer and researcher, notes in the Spring 1993 issue of **Prevention Evaluation Report**, published by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, that "certain themes run through the aggregate experience in prevention of delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, and conduct disorders, as well as substance use. In my view, these are the seven bottom-line components of an effective comprehensive prevention program:

1. Early and sustained intervention over time;

2. Individual attention, assuring attachment of high-risk youth to a responsible caring adult (may involve the provision of food and housing);

3. Focus on the acquisition of basic cognitive skills;

4. Provision of social and life skills training to promote social competency and resistence to peer influence;

5. Involvement of youth decision making and exposure to the world of community and work;

6. Involvement of parents through home visits, provision of services, and concern for their basic needs;

7. Staff development for all levels of caretakers (teachers, social workers, case aides, etc.) to understand child and adolescent development and cultural differences in the age of new morbidities."

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Appendix A

Percentage of NELS:88 8th- to 10th-grade dropouts who reported that various reasons for dropping out of school applied to them, by sex and race—ethnicity: 1990

		Sex		Race—Ethnicity	Black, Non-Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic
	Total	Male	Female	Hispanic	Black, Non-Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic
School related:						
Did not like school	51.2	57.8	44.2	42.3	44.9	57.5
Could not get along with teachers	35.0	51.6	17.2	26.8	30.2	39.2
Could not get along with students	20.1	18.3	21.9	18.2	31.9	17.4
Was suspended too often	16.1	19.2	12.7	14.5	26.3	13.1
Did not feel safe at school	12.1	11.5	12.8	12.8	19.7	9.5
Was expelled	13.4	17.6	8.9	12.5	24.4	8.7
Felt I didn't belong	23.2	31.5	14.4	19.3	7.5	31.3
Could not keep up with school work	31.3	37.6	24.7	19.5	30.1	35.8
Was failing school	39.9	46.2	33.1	39.3	30.1	44.8
Changed school and did not like new school	13.2	10.8	15.8	10.3	21.3	9.8
Job related:						
Could not work and go to school at same time	14.1	20.0	7.8	14.3	9.0	15.9
Had to get a job	15.3	14.7	16.0	17.5	11.8	14.3
Found a job	15.3	18.6	11.8	20.8	6.3	17.6
Family related:						
Had to support family	9.2	4.8	14.0	13.1	8.1	9.0
Wanted to have family	6.2	4.2	8.4	8.9	6.7	5.4
Was pregnant*	31.0	—	31.0	20.7	40.6	32.1
Became parent	13.6	5.1	22.6	10.3	18.9	12.9
Got married	13.1	3.4	23.6	21.6	1.4	15.3
Had to care for family member	8.3	4.6	12.2	7.0	19.2	4.5
Other:						
Wanted to travel	2.1	2.5	1.7	—	2.9	1.9
Friends dropped out	14.1	16.8	11.3	10.0	25.4	10.9

—Too few cases for a reliable estimate.
*Females only.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988—First Followup Survey,* 1990.

Percentage of NELS:88 8th- to 10th-grade dropouts who reported that they would be "somewhat or very likely to return to school" for various reasons, by sex and race—ethnicity: 1990

| | | Sex | | Race—Ethnicity | | |
| | | | | | Black, Non-Hispanic | White, Non-Hispanic |
	Total	Male	Female	Hispanic	Black, Non-Hispanic	White, Non-Hispanic
Academically related:						
If it would improve reading skills	41.2	42.5	40.0	53.3	62.4	28.1
If it would improve math skills	47.5	45.2	49.5	54.6	65.2	38.5
If I felt I could graduate	61.8	66.7	56.9	57.3	84.8	52.6
If I felt sure that I could get a good job after graduation	64.5	70.8	58.9	66.7	84.6	55.7
If I could take more job-related courses	51.4	59.6	43.8	48.3	56.8	49.1
If I felt sure I could get tutoring help to do better in school	48.3	49.8	46.8	57.5	53.4	42.8
School climate related:						
If there were no gangs at school	13.7	12.2	15.3	23.2	10.8	10.4
If I felt safer at school	20.6	19.8	21.4	32.3	26.6	12.8
If I felt I belonged at school	47.9	51.1	44.8	52.6	54.8	41.3
If school was more interesting	62.7	72.7	53.4	57.6	65.2	62.5
If I could participate in sports or other activities	30.1	40.4	20.6	30.0	28.4	27.9
Family related:						
If I had a baby sitter	14.2	6.4	22.0	16.7	20.2	9.8
If child care were available at school	16.5	5.1	27.9	19.3	28.7	9.6
If I could attend classes at night or on weekends	49.2	38.6	58.9	48.4	47.2	47.9
If I didn't have to work to support self or family	27.2	18.8	35.6	18.2	25.9	28.9
Other:						
If parents were interested in my education	37.9	37.3	38.5	50.3	47.7	28.9
If friends went back to school	28.1	37.6	19.6	22.1	20.2	32.6

Appendix B

Inventory of Policies and Practices Related to Student Failure and Dropping Out

Iowa Department of Education—1989

This inventory was developed to serve as a working tool to help local education agencies to review existing policies and practices in six different areas that may be negatively affecting student performance, especially in grades 7-12. The six areas are: instruction, discipline, support services, attendance, student activities, and school/community relations. The inventory represents a direct response to school research, publications, and dialogue on the need to develop more positive learning environments for all students.

The content of the inventory was developed under a grant from the Education Commission of the States allowing input from a 13-member task force and 237 student dropouts enrolled in seven different alternative schools throughout Iowa. Time limitations naturally prevented an exhaustive review of all policies and practices and potential alternatives. Therefore, the content is considered a beginning base to work from and should be revised and modified to accommodate new information to best meet the needs of local practitioners.

The format of the inventory identifies a policy or practice, the potential negative effect on students, and possible alternatives to the policy or practice. It allows the user to identify whether or not the policy or practice is a perceived problem and what action should be taken locally.

Local administrators and school board members are encouraged to use this inventory to gain information to help design local plans for at-risk student services. Students, teachers, parents, business persons, community agencies, and other interested persons could be involved to help develop consensus on local problems and solutions to the problems. The questionnaire in this inventory, which was used to help develop it, serves as an example of how information could be collected from students at the local level. Other suggestions for use of the inventory include:

- Local boards of education could schedule time to review one section of the inventory at a time during regularly scheduled meetings. This process may be more productive than trying to do the entire inventory in one setting.

- Involve all professional staff in the process of responding to the inventory through scheduled staff development. Allow time for the staff to complete the entire inventory or one section at a time. Encourage staff to make recommendations, allow time for discussion of the recommendations, and establish group consensus for final decisions. Prioritize decisions and set goals that can be realistically accomplished given the time available.

- Develop a similar format, identifying local policies for each education level, and have students and other community persons analyze the policies with regard to negative effect on students and suggest potential alternatives to the policies.

- Revise the enclosed student questionnaire and use it with all students. Prioritize policies and practices by using the total number of student responses. Specifically work on the top ten or top five policies depending on local capability.

PUNISHING STUDENT TRUANCY

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
A limit on the number of absences any student may have for illness, out-of-school suspensions and travel.	Promotes truancy in students who know they have a certain number of days they can be absent. Ignores cultural, religious, and important family functions. Ignores health problems that students and parents cannot control.	Place no quotas on absences. Expect all students to attend the required days. Provide for religious, cultural, and family involvement activities, accepting parent requests for absences. Reward good attendance, including students who have acceptable absences. Assist parents and students immedicately if an unexcused absence occurs and student performance is at risk. Establish a plan for how make-up work will get completed.		
Punishing student truancy by out-of-school suspension or lowered grades.	Pushes students out of school. Creates a feeling of not belonging. Establishes a posture that the opportunity to learn will be taken away rather than fostered. Indicates that learning will not be recognized if other behavior is unacceptable.	Provide assistance and referral services by student assistance teams and other means. Provide reasonable consequences for truancy violations. Provide opportunities to make up work by Saturday school, evening, or early bird programs. Assist students to get to school. Create incentive programs to encourage attendance. Reward academic achievement and behavior separately.		
Runaways, shelter residents, and students living with a friend not accepted as students until records are transferred from another district and/or proof of residency can be established.	Lessens valuable learning time. Reinforces feelings of not belonging. Reduces self-esteem. Reduces motivation to want to go to school.	Accept and serve students while seeking records, establishing guardianship, and establishing residency.		

INSTRUCTION

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis Problem Yes/No	Objective
Minimum course loads for all students.	Causes students who are not ready for full course loads to fail in one or more classes. Encourages truancy/tardiness.	Allow reduced loads for students in special cases after conferences with parents/guardians.		
Teaching styles and learning styles of students not matched.	Establishes stressed relationships between students and teachers. Reduces student performance. Establishes an "I can't learn" attitude. Causes discipline problems.	Provide collegial teaming to improve instruction. Allow time for matching teaching styles and learning styles. Schedule students based on teaching/learning styles. Allow students to change teachers, especially when failure exists and teacher/student conflict restricts learning.		
Tracking. Ability grouping.	Characterizes some students as "losers." Locks students into ability groups, preventing movement into other ability groups. Creates feelings of inadequacy. Limits the perception of students about their potential ability and aspirations for future opportunities.	Group students flexibly, allowing mixed ability groups and dynamic, cooperative learning. Allow voluntary course.		
Promotion based on strict credit attainment to achieve grade level.	Causes students who do not reach strict attainment level to repeat entire grade. Establishes student doubts that they belong in school.	Promote students on the basis of partial credit attainments. Require students to repeat only deficient areas. Establish alternative promotion programs, allowing students to catch up to age peers by Saturday schools, before school/after school tutoring, etc.		
No more than two credits allowed to be earned by correspondence or equivalency programs from other institutions.	Limits options for completing a high school education. Discourages students from trying.	Allow unlimited transfer of credits as long as the credits are judged equivalent to local credits.		

INSTRUCTION

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
K-12 retention.	Reduces self-esteem. Causes permanent negative effect on performance.	Transfer students to a class-room with fewer students, more individual attention, and special resources. Provide competency-based curriculum in multi-grade groupings. Provide an early readiness program to overcome development lags. Practice no retention after first grade; individualize programs starting at grade 9 based on projected plans (academic, personal/social, career/vocational) and parent/guardian input. Allow promotion with remediation in a given skill area, possibly in an alternative setting.		
Absence of transition programs for students experiencing a change of buildings and staff as they move from one level of education to another or as they move laterally.	Reduces student's sense of place or belonging.	Establish transition programs to assist students experiencing: a) a change of buildings and staff (elementary to junior high, junior high to senior high, senior high to post-secondary) b) restructuring of grades c) departmentalization d) transfer between school districts e) returning from long-term illnesses or institutionaliza-tion		
Increased requirements for graduation. Increased ratio of mandatory classes to electives.	Increases chances of failure for those not academically inclined. Restricts student options in elective areas such as vocational education.	Allow mandatory require-ments to be met through a network of electives, includ-ing vocational education. Allow articulation with other secondary and post-secondary institutions to satisfy graduation requirements.		

INSTRUCTION

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis Problem Yes/No	Objective
Expanding the number of classes that students must take in a given day. Scheduling all students to graduate from high school by the age of 17 or 18.	Increases student stress in trying to meet schedule demands. Increases chances of failure in one or more classes. Causes difficulties in meeting homework demands.	Expand options to meet the demand for increased requirements, such as expanded school year, Saturday school, extended graduation program to age 21, evening school. Provide students a choice to graduate by the age of 21.		
Defining the school day as 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. only.	Eliminates options for students who must work to satisfy basic needs.	Develop schedules to accommodate students' needs.		
Passive teaching practices such as lectures, monitoring seat work, and preparation for assignments.	Limits student achievement. Establishes and reinforces student passiveness. Negates students attaining and maintaining a sense of relevancy.	Increase the interaction between students and teachers and students and administrators by open discussions in classes, evaluative and opinion questioning, feedback on work performed, and more projects necessitating people/community interaction.		
Classroom instruction, guidance and teacher/student interaction that is not sensitive to gender differences and that favors boys over girls.	Lowers performance levels of female students. Limits curriculum choices of females. Leads to low self-esteem of female students. Causes pregnancy to become an escape mechanism. Channels females into training leading to lower-paid jobs.	Provide gender-free training for staff to change classroom instruction, guidance, and student/teacher interaction. Encourage females to enter nontraditional training areas, such as science, math, computer courses, managerial and technical trades, and professional career areas. Provide counseling to enhance girls' self-esteem. Provide instruction that encourages group activities and collaboration that complements female cognitive development.		

INSTRUCTION

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
No alternative education plan for those who drop out of school.	Reduced number of students who return to school. Dropouts experience high unemployment and/or low entry-level employment. Reduces participation in community activity. Contributes to criminal activity.	Follow up all school dropouts. Develop individual plans for students to complete a high school education by existing resources. Coordinate with business and industry and community agencies to provide an alternative school.		
Requiring all students to fulfill physical education requirements before graudation.	Causes students to fail physical education because they are embarrassed by the clothes they have to wear, are afraid to shower, can't afford proper dress or foot attire, or are embarrassed by showering together.	Provide alternative ways for students to complete physical education objectives, such as personal exercise programs, participation in community-sponsored activities, etc. Provide proper physical education attire for students who can't afford it. Provide for private showering if needed, or eliminate requirement to shower. Provide clean, neat clothing for students who need it and will accept it. Allow a variety of attire for physical education to accommodate students.		
Reassigning teachers through reduction-in-force actions to positions in which they have little interest or motivation.	Negative attitudes of teachers conveyed to students. Causes teachers to do an inadequate job and students to lose interest.	Provide staff development to prepare teachers to function adequately.		

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
Grading system based on grade points and reports by letter grades only.	Discourages students because grades are not sensitive to or do not reflect student progress. Creates inconsistent demands on students. Reduces self-esteem. Reinforces feelings of alienation.	Provide for alternative grading practices, including checklists of competency attainment, and letters to parents identifying specific progress. Establish consistency between teachers in how grades are calculated.		
Prerequisite courses.	Discourages students from taking courses and trying new areas.	Establish prerequisites only where absolutely necessary. Allow exceptions to pre-requisites where student backgrounds may suffice for prerequisites. Allow exploratory periods.		
Unlimited homework assignments. Applied practice and study exercises expected to be conducted as homework the majority of the time.	Causes low-learning students to be overwhelmed by homework. Results in failing grades/ loss of credits. Prevents students from developing adequate study habits.	Establish class time for practice and study exercises. Provide after school, before school, and weekend supervised study areas. Implement a phase-in system gradually increasing home-work expectations from elementary through secondary. Allow reduced class loads, allowing students more time to keep up and do well.		

DISCIPLINE				

			Local Analysis	
Policies and/or Practices	**Negative Effects**	**Alternative**	**Problem Yes/No**	**Objective**
Discipline and punishment carried out by teachers and principals only.	Reduces students' responsibility for good behavior. Causes students to feel powerless and alienated.	Allow student input into designing rules and punishment for behavior. Allow student involvement in discipline and punishment. Meet with students throughout the school year to discuss rules, responsibility, and plans for change. Implement "quality of school life" programs.		
Teachers in departmentalized programs with their own rules for discipline.	Creates different expectations in each class, confusion, and mixed reactions.	Establish common rules that all staff can agree upon. Limit the number of rules to as few as possible to avoid overemphasis on rules and punishment.		
Counseling services limited to crisis situations. Counseling staff required to do administrative assignments, taking time away from direct interaction with students.	Limits students' access to counselors. Students recognize counselors as not being helpful. Reduces help when students need it.	Provide counselors with paraprofessional and secretarial help to encourage more time with students. Establish a counseling program involving all students. Establish counseling as a service across all staff. Lower counselor/student ratios. Target students for increased help.		
Absence of clear, written communication on rules and discipline.	Creates misunderstanding about the consequences of behavior. Prevents students from filing a grievance and participating in due process.	Clearly communicate expected behavior and consequences of positive/negative behavior to students and parents. Reward proper, expected behavior. Establish grievance procedures. Establish written guidelines for students and parents on due process and rights and responsibilities. Incorporate model rules found in work places. Categorize rules by consequences/rewards. Example: Behavior disruptive to the learning environment yields severe consequences. Behavior not disruptive to the learning environment yields flexible problem solving.		

SUPPORT SERVICES

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
Tutorial and remedial assistance provided only through the elementary grades.	Failure in class work. Reduces achievement gains. Loneliness in having to face failure alone. Reduces feelings of success and belonging. Reinforces feelings to escape and drop out.	Continue tutorial and remedial assistance at the middle, junior high, and senior high levels. Increase paraprofessional help within classrooms at the middle, junior high, and senior high school levels. Establish learning centers that accommodate all students and that supplement study hall time by offering individual help. Create before- and after-school and weekend assistance, including transportation, if needed. Establish tutorial hot lines and peer assistance programs at the middle and high school levels.		
Fees for materials, tools, or equipment for classes.	Causes students to get behind in studies. Creates feelings of inadequacy, embarassment, low self-esteem. Contributes to criminal behavior.	Provide all basic needs, books, materials, tools, equipment, travel. Offer paid work experience in and out of school. Establish a fund to provide for students who do not pay.		
Attendance policy which allows out-of-school suspensions and/or expulsions. Students encouraged to drop out of school instead of offered options.	Gives students a reward for poor behavior. Has little correction effect. Excuses students from doing school work/homework. Encourages students to stay away from school.	Contract with community organizations to promote attendance and offer personal attention to truant students. Positively encourage attendance by home visits, telephone calls, attendance team to monitor truants, individual contracts for improving behavior, intervention counseling. Recognize and reward good attendance. Follow due process if student expulsions are unavoidable. Provide in-school suspensions in which the education program continues. Place students in alternative settings to continue work, such as Saturday school, school within a school.		

SUPPORT SERVICES

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
Computerized scheduling with no personal contact between staff and students.	Causes personality conflicts. Causes adjustment problems in trying to meet expectations.	At minimum, allow all at-risk students to schedule classes through personal contact. Allow for a mix of different grade-level students.		
Scheduling students to go from class to class without spending more than one class with the same group of students or the same teacher.	Offers little opportunity for consistent interaction with peers or same teacher. Causes students to believe they won't be missed and cut classes. Places students in classes with few or no friends.	Use flexible block scheduling, reducing fragmentation of school day.		
Special education placement without required pre-staffing with students and parents.	Causes students and parents to be overwhelmed and confused when involved in staffing, not knowing their options and rights. Lessens student and parent control in placement in and leaving programs.	Complete pre-staffings to inform parents and students of their rights and provide orientation to staffing. Coach parents and students on questions to ask.		
Pregnant students counseled out of regular school.	Dimishes student rights. Creates feelings of discrimination. Lowers self-esteem. Limits education options.	Allow pregnant teens to remain in regular program if so desired and medically safe. Allow pregnant teens to make individual choices regarding regular vs. alternative schooling. Allow adjusted scheduling and/or modified school day. Provide separate programs for pregnant teens on a choice basis. Link day-care services with school to allow teen parents to complete schooling.		
Little or no help for students involved in substance use and abuse.	Causes students to drop out of school to support a substance abuse habit. Results in sudden or prolonged failure from substance use/abuse behavior. Decreases feelings of self-worth. Increases frustration in seeking and finding help. Lessens ability to identify advocates in the school who can help.	Provide assistance and referral services by student assistance teams and other means. Increase student and parent awareness to prevent and limit substance use. Develop formal plans with support and treatment services from outside the school. Allow adjustments in student programs to accommodate treatment and also ensure success in school.		

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
Student recognition programs that limit recognition criteria and exclude many students from recognition.	Establishes feelings of alienation. Discourages student's sense of commitment to school. Sets the stage for leaving school.	Establish recognition programs for personal/social achievements and contributions or services to the school and community. Establish broad-based recognition programs that go beyond material rewards, such as pictures in the news, honorable mention by announcements in school and on radio, posted work, personal notes to parents/guardians, pats on the back, and special guests in community club functions.		
Dress code insensitive to social changes, cultural diversity, or religious backgrounds.	Establishes feelings of non-acceptance. Promotes peer pressure to not respect certain dress. Encourages students to challenge the system.	Allow any dress as long as it does not promote profanity or negatively affect the learning environment. Establish different dress days to reflect work-place dress, cultural differences, etc.		
Limiting enrollment in extracurricular activities. Participation fees and insensitive participation rules.	Reinforces a feeling in students that they are not good enough. Discourages students from wanting to enter extracurricular activity. Embarrasses low-income students who are unable to pay.	Provide extracurricular activities, encouraging maximum involvement of all students on a no-fee basis. Provide enough groups to accommodate all interested students. Coordinate with community agencies, parents, and business leaders to provide for constructive extracurricular activity. Sensitize enrollment practices to cultural differences and personal needs.		

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Policies and/or Practices	Negative Effects	Alternative	Local Analysis	
			Problem Yes/No	Objective
Absence of or limited formal plans linking school with community agencies.	Limits students' knowledge of agencies and services outside of school that can help them. Limits students' access to outside outreach services. Causes community services and school services to clash, negatively affecting the student's progress. Limits teachers' knowledge of what services are available and how to use them to benefit students.	Develop a formal plan of how the school and agencies can work together. Develop alternatives for students to receive services and go to school and achieve success. Initiate continuous inservice programs involving collaboration between school and service agencies.		
Reduced parent involvement in school programs at the middle/ junior high and senior high levels.	Reduces effort at home to complement the teacher's work. Reduces family sense of involvement in and importance of education. Reduces sense of belonging by parent and student.	Involve parents at one or all of three possible levels, letting them know what is going on, asking them to contribute, and asking them to be involved continuously. Provide programs to help parents help their children learn. Provide student/parent team programs, allowing parents and students to learn together. Involve teachers in activities that link the school activities with parents.		
Failure to incorporate students' cultures into school routines.	Discourages minority students by not recognizing their importance or ability to contribute. Creates and reinforces a feeling of not belonging.	Incorporate cultural recognition into classes. Implement special activities to recognize the current life situations and contributions of different cultural groups.		

This questionnaire can be used with students to help guide professional decisions regarding changes in policies and practices. Student responses can be ranked and utilized to prioritize policies and practices needing change.

Student Questionnaire

The school district is doing a study to determine what things school districts do to influence students to drop out rather than stay in school. Please place a check by all of the statements below that describe something that influenced your decision to drop out of school. Also place a check by any statement that describes something that caused you to not do well in school.

☐	1.	The school did not accept credits earned by correspondence.
☐	2.	I was retained one or more times before dropping out.
☐	3.	I had to be a full-time student with a full schedule.
☐	4.	The groups I studied with were considered low ability.
☐	5.	When I failed a grade I had to repeat everything rather than just the classes I failed.
☐	6.	Because of my pregnancy I was encouraged to leave.
☐	7.	Out-of-school suspensions and/or expulsions were a way to get out of work.
☐	8.	The way I dressed was not acceptable.
☐	9.	Teachers did not teach me the way I could learn.
☐	10.	The scheduling system did not allow me to choose my classes or teachers.
☐	11.	The number of required classes was increased to the point where I could not keep up with the work.
☐	12.	I had to take too many classes each day.
☐	13.	The school did not allow me to go part time and work part time.
☐	14.	Rewards were only given to students with good grades.
☐	15.	Teachers lectured most of the time.
☐	16.	Counselors and teachers did not help me feel that I belonged in school.
☐	17.	Teachers and counselors did not help me get started when I entered a new school.
☐	18.	My classes were short and switched so often I never had a chance to meet anyone and get to know them well.
☐	19.	Discipline and punishment rules were unfair to me.
☐	20.	Different teachers had different rules, which confused me.
☐	21.	Minority students were made to feel like they did not belong.

☐ 22. I needed a minority teacher/counselor to really understand my problems.

☐ 23. My parents did not help me to do well.

☐ 24. When I got help from a service outside of school it conflicted with my school schedule. I couldn't keep up all my classes and work on my problems at the same time.

☐ 25. My teachers did things that helped boys more than girls or girls more than boys.

☐ 26. Only a certain number of students were allowed to participate in clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities. I was never good enough.

☐ 27. I could not afford to pay fees for books, tools, and materials.

☐ 28. Counselors did not try to help me.

☐ 29. I needed more individual help to learn.

☐ 30. My drug and/or alcohol problem was not recognized or treated.

☐ 31. The punishment used by teachers and principals was scary.

☐ 32. The rules for punishment were not explained well and understood.

☐ 33. I missed school because I knew I could miss a certain number of days before anyone would do anything.

☐ 34. Suspension from school was a relief, so I did things to get suspended.

☐ 35. I was not accepted into school until my records were sent from another school and I missed too much work.

☐ 36. Physical education was embarrassing because of showering.

☐ 37. I could not afford the proper clothes for physical education.

☐ 38. Physical education activities were mostly things that I could not do well.

☐ 39. Most of my teachers did not care whether I did well.

☐ 40. I did not understand why I had to go to special education classes.

☐ 41. Although I tried to do the work, my grades were always low.

☐ 42. I did not take some courses because I had to take other courses to get in.

☐ 43. I could not keep up with homework assignments.

☐ 44. Reports were sent to my parents/guardians without me knowing about them.

☐ 45. Caring for my child was more important than going to school.

Feel free to add any additional ideas that you have about what caused you to not do well in school or to drop out.

Appendix C

Sample School Checklist for Dropout Prevention

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS: Safeguard	In Place	Not In Place	Comment
1. A variety of diverse school activities are available including interscholastics, intramurals, clubs, and organizations.			
2. A planned method of data collection concerning the demographics of students and their families is in place (needs assessment).			
3. Inservice for school personnel is planned and includes meeting the needs of at-risk students.			
4. A Student Assistance Plan is in place which includes student focus groups and other services as necessary including after-school programs, tutoring, peer counseling, etc.			
5. School policies are clear and applied in a consistent manner.			
6. School policies have been clearly communicated to all students, staff and parents.			
7. Parental involvement and support are established through newsletters, PSTAs, and parenting classes.			
8. Procedures are in place to involve students in community service.			
9. Procedures are in place to ease the transition between grades and buildings.			
10. Formal procedures are in place for school officials to share information and coordinate services with law enforcement, and other social services.			
11. There is a referral system in place for students who seem to have a problem.			
12. Counselors are provided at all levels and given the time to provide student-directed services.			

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS: Safeguard	In Place	Not In Place	Comment
13. Programs for pregnant and parenting students are in place.			
14. Plans are made to track dropouts and encourage their return to school.			
15. Alternative schooling is established and evaluated on an ongoing basis.			
16. Dropout data collection is maintained and used to plan programs.			
17. Site-based management is established and alternatives such as distance learning and correspondence coursework accepted.			
18. Preschool programs such as Head Start are available.			
19. School policy on retention of students is carefully examined and used only when other alternatives fail.			
20. Policy on such things as the "10-day" rule and "2.0" rule are examined for fairness, consistent application, and for encouragement rather than a barrier.			
SCHOOL CLIMATE: **Safeguard**			
21. Administration and teachers maintain an atmosphere of high expectations both academically and socially for all students.			
22. Students are encouraged to participate in school and classroom activities and functions.			
23. Teachers participate in parental visitations and reach out to parents through home visits and phone calls.			
24. Teachers recognize students through such things as "Student of the Week," displaying student work in the room or in halls, etc.			

SCHOOL CLIMATE: Safeguard	In Place	Not In Place	Comment
25. Teachers, counselors and administrators are available to students and encourage their interaction.			
26. Teachers vary their teaching styles to meet the needs of various learning styles, have high expectations for all students and provide meaningful involvement for all.			
27. Teachers provide clear expectations for student behavior and consistent discipline.			
28. Teachers and administrators interact with students during non-classroom times.			
29. Playgrounds are monitored, activities are organized, and discipline maintained.			
30. Students are involved in helping other students through peer tutoring, peer counseling, etc.			
31. Student-teacher ratio is appropriate			

APPENDIX D

Accreditation Standards directly relating to "at-risk" students and potential school dropouts

taken from:
Montana School Accreditation: Standards and Procedures Manual

The Montana Board of Public Education is responsible for establishing and maintaining accreditation standards for all public schools in Montana. The standards determine eligibility for state equalization aid; guarantee students the benefits of attendance in accredited schools and provide a basis for transfer; and establish the foundation for a basic system of quality education for all Montana children, regardless of where they live.

NOTE: WHILE THE MONTANA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS APPLY TO ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ALL THE STUDENTS ATTENDING THOSE SCHOOLS, SEVERAL HAVE A DIRECT BEARING ON STUDENTS CONSIDERED TO BE "AT RISK." STUDENTS MAY BE AT RISK FOR A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS SUCH AS DRUG, ALCOHOL OR TOBACCO USE, ETC., OR FOR BECOMING A SCHOOL DROPOUT. SEVERAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS ARE LISTED IN THIS APPENDIX FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION. HOWEVER, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT SCHOOL DISTRICT PERSONNEL BECOME FAMILIAR WITH ALL OF THE STANDARDS AND THEIR INTENT.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.603 (6):

Beginning 7/1/92 schools shall conduct follow-up studies of graduates and students no longer in attendance. The study results shall be considered in curriculum development and shared with staff and school consultants.

Discussion: This standard requires school districts to conduct follow-up studies of both graduates and students no longer enrolled including dropouts at the elementary, junior high/middle school and high school levels. The intent is for districts to use this information to shape curricula and other programs to more adequately meet the needs of all students.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.604 (1):

A school may apply to the board of public education through the office of public instruction for permission to use an alternative to any standard, section of standards, or the entire set of standards, excluding standards pertaining to law or certification requirements.

Discussion: It is the intent of the "alternative standard" to allow school districts the flexibility of providing educational programs which meet the intent of the standards through a modified approach. An alternative may better meet the educational needs of the district's students while not meeting the "letter" of the requirements outlined by the standards. An alternative, however, must clearly be equal

to or better than what is accomplished by the present minimum accreditation rule(s).

Accreditation Standard 10.55.701 (3) (f and h):

(f)   A policy on student, parent, and school employee due process rights;
(h)   A transfer policy for determining the appropriate placement of incoming students;

Discussion: School districts must have in place a policy for due process and students, staff and parents should know and understand their rights. A transfer policy will allow schools to correctly place students who transfer in, thus meeting their educational needs.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.701 (8) (a):

(a)   Establish a system to keep parents/guardians up to date on students' progress;

Discussion: The education of a child requires the cooperation of the school, home and community. Parental involvement, support, and encouragement are important in educational success.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.703 (c) (iii and iv):

(iii)   Encourage teachers to have high expectations for student achievement,
(iv)   Stress the importance of parents' and students' roles in academic success.

Discussion: Teachers must have high expectations for **all** students for them to reach their potential. Again, the emphasis is on both student and parental involvement in the education process.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.710 (1):

Effective 7/1/89 guidance and counseling staff and/or services shall be provided for elementary students.

Discussion: Guidance and counseling services are critical to meet the needs of all students and this standard emphasizes the importance of "early prevention" efforts in order to ensure later success.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.711, 712, and 713:

711: Class size and teacher load,
712: Class size: Elementary,
713: Teacher load and class size: High School, Junior High, Middle School, and grades 7 and 8 budgeted at high school rates.

Discussion: These standards set the **maximum** number of students in any given class recognizing the needs of students and also indicate that there is no minimum class size established, giving school districts the ability to reduce class size to meet the needs of "at-risk" students.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.801 (d, f, h, and i):

(d)   Develop, policies, procedures, and rules that respect the rights of all learners and promote an awareness of and concern for the well-being of others;

(f)   Provide programs and services that meet the needs of students which the school has identified as at-risk;

(h)   Encourage students to take responsibility for their education, including preparing for and participating in class and school activities, taking full advantage of learning services provided, helping design their educational goals, and conducting themselves respectfully and appropriately;

(i)   Encourage the active involvement of parents in their childrens' education and in their school;

Discussion: These directly relate to the reduction of risk factors identified for school dropouts. Active, meaningful involvement in school is important to everyone's success.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.803 (h):

Identify, using the school's own criteria, students who may be at risk, in need of special services, bilingual training or who are otherwise exceptional.

Discussion: In order to meet the unique needs of all students, it is imperative that those needing special programs or services be identified and then appropriately placed or needed programs developed.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.906 (3) (a):

Each governing authority may waive specific course requirements based on individual student needs and performance levels. Waiver requests shall also be considered with respect to age, maturity, interest, and aspirations of the students and shall be in consultation with the parents or guardians.

Discussion: The intent of this standard is to provide local school districts the flexibility necessary to meet the needs of individual students and to determine those needs cooperatively with the family.

Accreditation Standard 10.55.906 (4) (a):

With the permission of the local district trustees, a student may be given credit for a course satisfactorily completed in a period of time shorter or longer than normally required and, provided that the course meets the district's curriculum and assessment requirements, which are aligned with the learner goals stated in the education program. Examples of possible acceptable course work include accredited correspondence and extension courses, adult education, summer school, work study, specially designed courses and challenges to current courses.

Discussion: Again, this is designed to allow local districts the flexibility necessary to meet the needs of individual students and assist those in need of special course consideration.

APPENDIX E

DROPOUT DATA

NONCOMPARABLE SCHOOL DROPOUT STATISTICS

In spite of the attention given to keeping students in school, limited reliable information is available about the actual incidence, rates, and grade levels of students leaving school before completing their education.

Reliable and uniform school dropout data do not exist at present. Available data suggests the lack of a uniform or comparable process for identifying and counting school dropouts.

Some states collect dropout statistics, but available data is not based on common definitions, grade levels, nor timeframes, and many schools do not systematically keep records of students who enter or leave their systems.

Several types of dropout rates may be calculated: an event rate which measures the proportion of students who drop out in a single year; a status rate which measures those who have not completed school and are not enrolled at one point in time; and a cohort rate which follows a single group of students over time.

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU DROPOUT DATA

Every ten years the U.S. Census Bureau gathers statistics on the population ages 16 to 19 who are not enrolled in high school and who do not have a high school degree. However, this data is only gathered every 10 years and is not available until several years after it is gathered. The 1990 census data reported this information as a national status dropout rate of 11.2 percent and a Montana rate of 7.1 percent, eighth lowest.

DEVELOPING COMPARABLE DROPOUT STATISTICS

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, has been striving for the past several years to develop a structure that would provide accurate, comparable, uniform, and timely data for an annual event dropout rate.

A multitude of factors impact the determination of a dropout, but those factors had to be reduced to a simplified definition and a simplified calculation in order to be applied to a multiplicity of situations.

The method of calculating a dropout rate using the number of dropouts has become a politically sensitive issue, and is being reassessed. The current calculation method is to determine the number of

students that meet the dropout definition for each grade level from 7th through 12th grade; and divide the number of dropouts for each grade by the average enrollment for that grade in the current and previous school year (sum the enrollment[1] from the current year and prior year and divide by 2). The sum of the high school dropouts and the total high school enrollment may be used to calculate a high school dropout rate.

(Number of dropouts)/(enrollment prior year + enrollment current year)/2)

DROPOUT DEFINITION

The standard dropout definition developed by NCES is "A dropout is an individual who:

(1)   was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year;

(2)   was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year[2],

(3)   has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program, and

(4)   does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:

   (i)   transfer to another public school district, private school, or state- or district-approved education program,

   (ii)   temporary absence due to suspension or school-approved illness, or

   (iii)   death."

[1]The October 1 (or early October date) is used as the base date for school year enrollment.

[2]The current school year is the school year in which the dropout count is taken. An October 1 (or official fall enrollment data) is used as the base date for school year enrollment. A student enrolled during 1992-93, but not enrolled at the beginning of 1993-94, is a dropout for 1993-94 from the grade for which they did not report, whether they dropped out during the school year or were fall no-shows.

For information on systemmatically collecting dropout data, contact Dori Nielson (444-3656) or Spencer Sartorius (444-4434) at the Office of Public Instruction.